

1. QUOTE OF THE WEEK

The following is from a letter written in July 1530 to Jerome Weller, a 31-year-old friend who had previously lived in the Luther home, tutored his children, and was now struggling with spiritual despair:

. . Excellent Jerome, You ought to rejoice in this temptation of the devil because it is a certain sign that God is propitious and merciful to you.

You say that the temptation is heavier than you can bear, and that you fear that it will so break and beat you down as to drive you to despair and blasphemy.

I know this wile of the devil. If he cannot break a person with his first attack, he tries by persevering to wear him out and weaken him until the person falls and confesses himself beaten.

Whenever this temptation comes to you, avoid entering upon a disputation with the devil and do not allow yourself to dwell on those deadly thoughts, for to do so is nothing short of yielding to the devil and letting him have his way.

Try as hard as you can to despise those thoughts which are induced by the devil. In this sort of temptation and struggle, contempt is the best and easiest method of winning over the devil.

Laugh your adversary to scorn and ask who it is with whom you are talking.

By all means flee solitude, for the devil watches and lies in wait for you most of all when you are alone. This devil is conquered by mocking and despising him, not by resisting and arguing with him. . . .

When the devil throws our sins up to us and declares we deserve death and hell, we ought to speak thus:

“I admit that I deserve death and hell.

What of it?

Does this mean that I shall be sentenced to eternal damnation?

By no means.

For I know One who suffered and made a satisfaction in my behalf.

His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Where he is, there I shall be also.”

Yours,

Martin Luther

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Martin Luther, [*Letters of Spiritual Counsel*](#), trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (orig., 1960; reprint, Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 84–87.

2. NEWS FROM ARBCA/IRBS/RBMS MINISTRIES

As this is the first week of the year it seems appropriate to me for us to pray for all of our church plants and the plants in which our member churches are involved.

Covenant Reformed Baptist Church Plant in Longview, TX: Heritage Baptist Church, Shreveport, LA

Pilgrims Reformed Baptist Church Plant in Valley City, ND: Community Baptist Church, Fargo, ND

Surrey Reformed Baptist Church Plant, Surrey, BC: Free Grace Baptist Church, Chilliwack, BC

Vernon Reformed Baptist Church Plant, Vernon, BC: Free Grace Baptist Church, Chilliwack, BC

Resurrection Reformed Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN: Emmanuel Reformed Baptist Church, Georgetown, TX

Providence Reformed Baptist Church in Casa Grande, AZ: Grace Covenant Church in Gilbert, AZ

3. ARBCA WEBSITE INSIGHTS

4. NEWS FROM ARBCA MEMBER CHURCHES

From Grace Covenant Church in Gilbert, AZ

Dear brethren in Christ,

Greetings to you in the name of our God, who has been our help in ages past and our hope for years to come.

The Lord Jesus has faithfully preserved Grace Covenant Church throughout a turbulent 2018 in keeping with his promise that the gates of hell would not prevail against his church. With the new year comes new hope and opportunity for kingdom work.

Our first official ministry of the new year was a memorial service for a faithful church member who unexpectedly died on the previous week. Every congregation has certain members who are always encouraging the church, without ever causing any problems. Alex Wood was such a member. Alex was 63 years old and had been a personal friend for 30 years. Our entire congregation grieves his loss though we know he is rejoicing before the Lamb in glory. Just this past Sunday morning a 24 year old man was suddenly killed in a car accident. His two older brothers and their wives are members of our church and they would appreciate prayer for the Lord's comfort of all the Mitchell family during this time of sorrow.

Last summer we suffered a severe church-split resulting in the sudden departure of many who were disgruntled, some of whom were reckless trouble-makers. Since then Grace Covenant has been enjoying a close-knit unity and love that we had not known for many years. In the past few months the Lord has brought a few new families through our doors for which we are most grateful. These new visitors have already expressed interest in membership which is most encouraging. Just this past Lord's Day, we had 8 more visitors come through our doors for our first worship service of the year. We interpret this as a further indication that the Lord has not abandoned us. We can certainly relate to the words of poet George Herbert, "I live to show His power, who once did bring my joys to weep, and now my griefs to sing." An even better poet wrote, "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!" (Ps 30:11–12) Already we sense the warm rays of God's favor breaking through the dark billows of our recent storm. Indeed, he gives grace for today and bright hope for tomorrow - great is his faithfulness.

However there is a member who has come under church-discipline for leaving his wife. He will likely be excommunicated by the end of this month, unless he repents. This sad providence is a clear reminder that we live in a fallen world where sin still runs wild without the Lord's grace to restrain it.

We would appreciate it if you would please uphold us in prayer for the following petitions:

For Rob Holmes to be reinstalled to the office of elder at our Jan. 27 congregational meeting.

For our sweet unity in the church to grow even stronger.

For a member under church discipline to repent and be reconciled to his wife.

For the Lord to bless the preaching of the Word to God's glory and the conversion of his elect.

For the Lord to continue to bring visitors through our doors on a regular basis.

For our members not to grow weary as they take on extra ministries at the church.

That we would all remain faithful in serving the Lord.

Gratefully yours,

John Giarrizzo

5. NEWS OUTSIDE OF ARBCA